

# **Recurrent Coastal Flooding Sub Panel Update –**

**September 12, 2013**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am writing about an exciting and ambitious opportunity to collectively address one of the highest probability / high impact hazards threatening our Commonwealth: Recurrent Flooding. The [Secure Commonwealth Panel](#) has established a Sub-Panel to focus on this threat and we hope you will agree to be a part of the effort. I want to thank all of you who have already offered to assist; many agencies on this correspondence are specifically mentioned in either the Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief Act, the Virginia Flood Damage Reduction Act of 1989 (§10.1-602) and/or Governor McDonnell's Executive Order 18.

## **Background and Details:**

Prior to the legislative session of 2011/2012, the General Assembly and Virginia Senate passed, with the Governor signing, House Joint Resolution 50 and Senate Joint Resolution 76, 2012. This charged the Virginia Institute of Marine Science (VIMS) to complete an examination of the overall issue of recurrent flooding and sea level rise in the Tidewater Region. This report (found [here](#)), completed and submitted to the General Assembly in January 2013, identifies recurrent flooding issues, examines predictions for future flooding challenges and evaluates a global set of adaptation strategies for reducing the impact of flood events.

On May 6, 2013, this report and its findings were presented to the Secure Commonwealth Panel (presentation and briefing paper attached). As a result, and in an effort to adequately and effectively meet the challenge of recurrent flooding, Panel Chair, Secretary Terrie Suite, established a Sub-Panel for which I have been assigned Co-Chair with [Senator John Watkins](#).

As you can imagine, a great deal of effort went into the VIMS study, and much more is needed to synergize our efforts and otherwise respond to the threat in a unified manner. To be clear, there has been terrific work performed throughout the Commonwealth and elsewhere! Every effort is being made to avoid duplication, but instead highlight, leverage and maximize those efforts into one team approach. Many projects, studies and reports have been researched, reviewed and marked for inclusion for reference in this effort. Along with the email distribution list, you will see in the attached sub-panel document the breadth and diversity of all involved in this effort – multiple sectors and levels of government. You will see we have the talents, resources and capabilities to affect meaningful and responsible change to protect our coastline. That said, please do not assume there is a complete awareness of all efforts! As we move forward, I respectfully request a brief note to let me know about any initiatives in which you are engaged, and any other agencies/individuals who should be included on this list. In the meantime, I will continue to compile that which I have reviewed and receive and will reach out to you individually as time permits.

I want to let you know there is a policy-level sub-panel kick-off meeting consisting of the attached leaders on September 25, 2013 where the recommendations of VIMS (listed below) will be reviewed and the course for action established. Soon thereafter, you should expect to be contacted for your critical input and expertise as it pertains to one or more of the recommendations included below (plus one additional recommendation focused on outreach and education).

Please feel free to reply with confirmation of your interest, or kindly provide an alternate contact for your agency/organization.

Again, this is a significant issue we face which does not get better with time. Thank you again for your consideration and partnership – we look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,

Jim

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#### **VIMS RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Given the long time frame necessary to effectively address recurrent flooding and sea level rise issues and given the speed at which risks are projected to increase, Virginia and its coastal localities should immediately begin comprehensive and coordinated planning efforts.
2. The State should initiate identification, collection and analysis of data needed to support effective planning for response to recurrent flooding issues in Virginia.
3. The State should take a lead role in addressing recurrent flooding in Virginia for the following reasons:
  - a. Accessing relevant federal resources for planning and mitigation may be enhanced through state mediation.
  - b. Flooding problems are linked to water bodies and therefore often transcend locality boundaries.
  - c. Resource prioritization efforts will require consistent or standardized assessment protocols across all localities and regions.
  - d . Localities do not feel enabled to address all flooding and sea level rise issues.
4. The State should request an expert review of local government legal authority to address current and projected flooding risks and what levels of evidence are likely to be required to justify locality action.

The State should then enact any enabling authority needed to allow localities to address current and projected flooding issues.

5. The State should develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing recurrent flooding issues throughout Tidewater Virginia.